

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

January 6, 2009

On my motion last March, the County Office of Child Care convened key stakeholders to develop an integrated policy approach to the issue of child care. As a result, in October, the Chief Executive Officer submitted to our offices the Child Care Policy Framework (Framework). The Framework was developed with input from the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, the Child Care Planning Committee and has been endorsed by the Education Coordinating Council. In addition, the local child care resource and referral agencies, Los Angeles Universal Preschool, First 5 Los Angeles, representatives of the Southern California Association for the Education of Young Children and County department representatives all provided input to the development of this ambitious policy agenda.

Our need for a comprehensive approach to this issue is long overdue. Countless studies – including those conducted by our own County – clearly document the benefits of investing in and focusing on high quality child care and development programs, particularly for at-risk families and their children the County serves directly. Yet child care policies, programs and funding at the federal, state and local level remain balkanized, inefficient and inconsistent. Early care providers face byzantine contracting processes which impair their ability to serve as many children as possible at the highest level of quality. A disappointing result is that between 2005 and 2008, over \$162 million in unused child care funds were sent back to the state from providers in Los Angeles County.

The need for those dollars is well documented. Los Angeles County sent a report to the state in 2008 report stating that only 11,000 infants who qualify for subsidized care are served, out of an eligible population of 116,000. Only 28,000 qualifying school-age children are served, out of an eligible population of 260,000. Only 32,000 of preschool aged children are served out of an eligible population of 110,000. We also have over 51,000 children on waiting lists for subsidized care in this County, 60 percent of whom are in need of full time care.

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Despite full knowledge of this information, we continue to work within a highly complex, overly bureaucratic structure that seems to be designed to restrict rather than allocate badly needed service dollars. The fact that we are sending one dollar back to the state is unacceptable, and this situation is but one example of the inefficient, “silo” approach we have in place on this issue.

The Framework lays out broad goals and detailed objectives within an ambitious timeframe. It provides a solid foundation to look at the most effective ways of marshaling our resources and knowledge to better structure our county services around the issue of child care. It includes funding information, service needs, legislative recommendations and it also discusses the child care and development needs of clients receiving County services, County employees, and County residents overall.

In all, the Child Care Policy Framework encompasses for the first time the entire spectrum of child development services and it lays the groundwork to establish a countywide mechanism whereby we can ensure that all public resources dedicated to early childhood development are fully utilized, particularly for those families directly served by the County. It defines an innovative role for Los Angeles County to play in improving the delivery of child care and development services to our clients, our employees and our residents.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors adopt the Child Care Policy Framework and direct the Chief Executive Office - Office of Child Care to begin implementation of the Child Care Policy Framework, in order to:

- Mobilize County departments and stakeholders to incorporate access to high quality child care and development services aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect; supporting family self-sufficiency; and promoting school and life success.
- Advance public policies at all levels of government that would ensure that children and their parents receive the child care and development services needed to build strong foundations for healthy, productive lives.
- Identify opportunities for Los Angeles County to promote collaboration among services providers and advocates on behalf of needed legislative or regulatory changes, in particular the issue of unspent child care funds being returned to the State.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Office of Child Care provide status reports on the implementation of the Framework every six months for the first two years following the adoption of the Framework, and update this plan every two years, on the anniversary of the Policy Framework’s adoption.

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